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EPISTEMOLOGICAL DUALISM VS. METAPHYSICAL DUALISM.¹

IN the present paper I desire to re-open the question of epistemological dualism in the hope of showing new leads in which good philosophical ore can be mined. To continue the figure, it is my belief—and I know the belief of many others—that modern epistemological realism decided too quickly that the shaft driven by dualism ended in the bare rock. Was there not simply a ‘fault’ here beyond which careful exploration would have found ore again?

Epistemological dualism has suffered in the main from three things: (1) its association with Cartesian metaphysical dualism, (2) the false bias toward subjectivism assigned to it, and (3) the belief that it cannot escape an indefensible copy-view. Against all three indictments the modern epistemological dualist, who calls himself a critical realist, wishes to enter a plea of not-guilty. In what follows I shall try to defend a critical form of epistemological dualism against these traditional counts. And by so doing I shall hope to justify the discipline of epistemology itself, which is being severely attacked these days by the pragmatists. Not that I wonder at their impatience, for which there has been sufficient cause.

In his recent attack upon epistemology as such, in his essay, “A Recovery of Philosophy,” Professor Dewey argues that *all* epistemology is guilty of the above errors. Beginning with an exposition of his own view of empiricism as contrasted with traditional empiricism, he maintains that epistemology has been a product of false assumptions and unveracious descriptions. And he draws up a tremendous indictment of Humianism, Kantianism and idealism. All of them were founded on a non-empirical doctrine of experience. But why? “The traditional

¹ This paper was read before the meeting of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association, December, 1920.

account is derived from a conception once universally entertained regarding the subject or bearer of experience. The description of experience has been forced into conformity with this prior conception; it has been primarily a deduction from it, actual empirical facts being poured into the moulds of the deduction."¹ Thus the self, soul, subject or spirit was taken to be non-natural or supernatural. "Even if they had wished to make a complete break, they had nothing to put as knower in the place of the soul." He argues that the bearer of experience was conceived as outside of the world; so that experience consisted in the bearer's being affected through a type of operations not found anywhere in the world, while knowledge consists in surveying the world, looking at it, getting the view of a spectator. In this way, Professor Dewey argues that epistemology has assumed that "the bearer of experience is antithetical to the world instead of being in and of it."

Now the epistemological dualist is just as desirous as is Professor Dewey to eliminate any such metaphysical dualism. He, also, is a naturalist who is convinced that his data are natural events or occurrences. He, also, means by the subjective a "specific mode of objectivity." He does not use it in any disparaging way, any way which assumes a contrast with a peculiarly *real* object and implies that "the organism *ought* not to make any difference when it operates in conjunction with other things." The epistemological dualist of to-day has no thought of a ghost-like knower who watches the world but is not of it. He is certain that this attack upon epistemology has no other than an historical meaning for him. And it is at his own risk that the pragmatist assumes that the epistemological dualist is self-deceived and knows not what he believes. It is a mistake to underestimate your opponents, and savors of sectarian passion. The differentia between pragmatism and epistemological dualism does not lie in the naturalism of the one and the supernaturalism of the other.

The modern epistemological dualist begs to differ from those who identify epistemology with metaphysical dualism. He can see no logical connection between his own epistemology and Cartesian

¹ *Creative Intelligence*, p. 30.

dualism and he is, moreover, no dualist. To assert that one's idea in knowledge is numerically distinct from the object known does not imply that they are parts of different worlds. Only those who take knowledge wholesale and disregard its actual setting would at all be inclined to make this inference.

The modern epistemological dualist always concerns himself with an individual knower and his knowledge-claims. He takes knowledge retail and not wholesale. The idea (which is the *content* of knowledge and not the *object*) is bound up with the knower existentially. It is his accepted idea or thought of the object. But may not the knower be in the same world as the object known? I can see no reason why the epistemological dualist cannot be as biological as the pragmatist. To put the argument concretely, I know the tree outside my window in terms of, and by means of, my percept-datum. The tree is existentially external to me while still in the same objective physical nexus. The percept-datum is subjective only in the sense that it is bound up existentially with me as a specific concrete knower. It assuredly is not subjective in the sense that it is non-natural and belongs to a 'mind' as a mysterious realm apart. Just what mind is, is a problem to be determined in the course of the investigation. Surely there is in this approach nothing opposed to objectivism and naturalism. Sense-data are natural events taken as the material of knowledge, and the content of an act of knowledge is an interpretation of the affirmed object. We can accept all occurrences as equally real. It is a question of their use and status. The subjective is an occurrence which can be used as content of an act of knowledge. The reason for this is that it is in the possession of the active brain-mind of an organic knower. The knower is quite apparently one thing among others; what kind of a thing empirical knowledge, and not epistemology, informs us. To return to the case of knowing the tree outside my window, this knowledge-claim is a specific empirical act and must be empirically analyzed in the light of all the relevant facts. This demand for analysis is simply the expression of scientific standards—and the result is epistemology. Epistemology develops out of specific facts and problems.

And yet because the history of philosophy is so constantly present as a part of the apperceptive system of the thinker, very few philosophers are able to examine an analysis with unprejudiced eyes. "Epistemological dualism? Ah, yes; you assume a 'mind' which *knows* its own states, and you postulate an external world to which those states must somehow correspond." Such is the rapid-fire response of the majority of philosophers. "Yes" and "no" must be our reply. It all depends upon what you mean by the terms mind, states, knows, and correspond. These terms must be taken empirically and away from any substantialist setting.

Historically, epistemological dualism was shipwrecked on the puzzle of the status of ideas in knowledge. Attention swung to the ideas, and the query arose, Is it not possible that in all cognition what is known is never the object itself but only an idea *representing* that object? But how representing? And how can you be certain that there is an object to represent? When epistemological dualism once allowed itself to be formulated thus, its fate was settled. Radical empiricism, or epistemological monism, seemed so much more simple. The idea is given: why not call the idea the object of knowledge? Representing an unknown which you only infer does not sound plausible. So thought Berkeley and Hume; and the neo-realists have followed them.

But this radical empiricism was not empirical enough. Anti-epistemologist as he is, Dewey has seen this fact. Mere subjective occurrences, call them sense-data, images, concepts according to their level, are not ideas in the cognitive sense. It is the *cognitive use* of these subjective events which makes them ideas. The fact was that attention had swung from the cognitive use of mental data to their mere givenness. Logic and epistemology were virtually shoved aside in favor of the elements of physiological psychology. The conditions of the *material* of knowledge were studied to the exclusion of the act, content and claim of knowledge. In the second place, this first burst of empiricism was not empirical enough in another regard. It did not realize the significance of the fact that we have such distinctions as that between the

subjective and the external world and that we make cognitive claims to know this external world.

The way of ideas did not win without a protest. Thomas Reid attempted to carry through a distinction between sensation and perception. Unfortunately, he was unable to analyze this distinction and fell back upon common sense as a court of appeal—a refuge denied to one who sets out to be a philosopher and so reflective and analytic. “We are so constituted,” argues Reid, “that, on the occasion of *sensation*, we *perceive* material objects and their qualities existing independently of the percipient mind. . . . Grasping a ball, we perceive it at once to be hard, figured, and extended, moving the hand along the table, the qualities of hardness, smoothness, extension, and motion are at once *suggested* to the mind. . . . The knowledge of the primary qualities thus obtained is inexplicable; all that can be said is, that *by an original principle of our constitution* sensations of touch arouse in our minds the conception of, and belief in, external things. . . . From the natural sign in sensation the mind passes at once to the thing signified, though reason can discern no tie or connection between them.”¹

Can the modern philosopher with the help of psychology explain the distinction between sensation and perception, and indicate the factors of the process by which we build up the category of thinghood? If so, he can explain that which to Reid was inexplicable. Puzzled as he was, Reid yet held obstinately to the fact that in knowledge we claim to know external things and not ideas. But *how* we could know external things he really did not see. The modern epistemological dualist believes that he has found the opening and that it leads to critical realism.

It is interesting to note that Hodgson, who is generally acknowledged to be the father of the English realistic movement, makes a demand or postulate very similar to Reid's. He asserts that a thing is what it is known as, a reality independent of the existence of a perceiving consciousness. But neither was he able to carry this postulate through successfully. He set a problem instead of giving a solution.

¹ Cf. Laurie, *Scottish Philosophy in its National Development*, p. 139.

The critical realist believes that he can give a solution of the problem in terms of two things: (1) a more complete analysis of perception, and (2) a re-interpretation of knowledge.

Why is it wrong to identify perception with the givenness of a sense-datum? Because a sense-datum is only an elementary part of the total experience of perceiving. There are *two* distinguishable elements in the total experience of perceiving, the datum, or content, of perception and the affirmation of an object. With regard to the *content* of perception, the critical realist points out—in this he is in harmony with modern logic and psychology (*pace* Russell)—that there are many meanings and images in the content of perception. We perceive what we take to be things and not sensations. The category of thinghood has been developed and, with its arrival, sense-data are interpreted as qualities of things.

Perception involves a coördinating and interpretative response to a complex of stimuli, and there is attached to it and implied in it the sense of contrast between my bodily self and the things surrounding it to which it is responding or tending to respond. To remove sense-data from this context is to be unempirical. The modern bio-psychologist can understand the level of perception with its distinctions and categories in a way impossible to either Reid or Kant. They were seeking some innate principle by which to lift sensation to perception.

This approach enables us to discover the factors in the total experience of perceiving responsible for the element we called the affirmation of the object. The attitude, or set, of the organism in perception floods consciousness with a sense of something co-real to which it is responding. The motor impulses to reach out to, or move toward, this something carry out this feeling and develop it. And I think that there can be no doubt that additional meanings, such as externality, independence of direct control, and persistence, all add themselves to this nucleus to constitute the affirmation of, or belief in, a co-real object. Professor Strong calls this affirmation instinctive. It seems to be quite empirical and expressive of the nature and situation of the organism. The structure of the field of consciousness reflects the situation of the organism.

These elements combine into the apparent givenness of an object. Such is the psychological derivation of naïve realism and the reason for its strength. Now the epistemological dualist simply argues that, while all this is natural and inevitable, reflection forces him to declare that the actual physical thing, which is the object of the *organic act* of perception, cannot be given in consciousness as the content of perception is given. Into the facts breaking down naïve realism I shall not here enter. They are a part of the stage property of philosophy which only the desperation of the neo-realist led him to challenge.

I would suggest that the flaw in Berkeley's analysis of perception was due to his lack of attention to the psychological factors mediating the affirmation of the object. In common with all radical empiricists he did not do justice to the category of thinghood. The inadequacies of Lockeian realism furnish him with a partial excuse. But there can be little doubt that he was too anxious to get rid of a physical world distinct from sense-data to be quite scientific in his approach.

Though in a very summary fashion, we have thus far endeavored to show that modern epistemological dualism does not begin with a metaphysical dualism; nor does it assert that we know ideas first and then infer objects. There is no bias toward subjectivism in it. Objects are affirmed rather than inferred, though reasoning supports the affirmation and develops its implications. We believe from the beginning, as much as the naïve realist does, that we know external things; but reflection on the conditions of knowledge forces us to realize that the external thing cannot be inspected or intuited, that only subjective content is given to awareness. *The consequence of this conclusion is that the exact nature of knowledge becomes a problem in a way that it does not for the naïve realist.* Knowledge of a physical thing cannot be an intuition of it in part or in whole. A thing cannot enter consciousness or be in a cognitive relation of compresence with consciousness. It is the content of perception or the content of judgment which occupies this position.

What, then, is knowledge? Let it be noted that the critical realist does not fall back upon blanket contrasts between two stuffs called mind and matter. His analysis remains empirical. Such contrasts are for him epistemologically unreal because they are not found in the knowledge situation as it presents itself. Any ultimates must be worked up to in the course of empirical reflection rather than assumed.

The critical realist differs, then, from neo-realist and pragmatist on two fundamental points. These are, (1) the acceptance of the distinction between the content of knowledge and the object of knowledge, and (2) the frank recognition of the consciousness (psychical or subjective)-and-organism problem. It is evident that these two positive doctrines of critical realism hang together. And it is probably because of the second doctrine that the epistemological dualist is still so frequently thought of as a metaphysical dualist. But surely fairness suggests that the recognition of a problem is no proof that there is only the traditional dualistic solution of it. And is it not better to admit a problem than to act ostrich-like, as pragmatists and behaviorists are doing? Moreover, epistemology comes first logically and is to be settled on its own data. It has no direct connection with the problem of the relation between the subjective and the organism even though it leads to a closer statement of the problem. The mistake with both Descartes and Locke was the constant injection of metaphysics into epistemology. Our modern empiricism has helped to allay that evil.

But we are now confronted with the most difficult of our tasks, the working out of a clear idea of knowledge. At the beginning of the paper we said that critical realism had to meet the indictment that it could not escape an indefensible copy-view. To this question we now turn. I believe that much that is novel in the position lies here and that it has not been grasped.

The critical realist must show that past representative realism committed certain blunders which he can correct, and then he must work out a critical correspondence theory which is proof against the traditional objections.

In regard to the first point, he argues that the blunders of past representative realism were due to two things in the main: (1) the retention of the idea of the physical thing which grows up through the identification of content of perception with the object of perception, the only change being the rejection of secondary qualities so-called; and (2) the tendency to make an idea of a thing an object in the same sense that a physical thing is an object. The first mistake led to the assumption that physical things possess qualities which are copyable, and that these qualities inhere in an unknowable substratum. Now I, at least, reject this substance-quality schema in its entirety and hold that it is a result of the influence of naïve realism. Representative realism of the Lockean type has often been called representative perceptionism, and this term expresses exactly what its outlook is. It has not sufficiently broken loose from naïve realism. Its ideal is an indirect intuition of a *sensuous object*. The second mistake, that of treating a cognitive idea as an object in the same sense that a physical thing is an object, led to a substitution of the category of resemblance in place of the act of cognition *by means of the idea*. It is easily seen that this second mistake played into the hands of the first.

Now it is no wonder that the two basic arguments customarily employed against epistemological dualism are, (1) that you can never compare object and idea, and (2) that it assumes that the effect is *like* the cause. The way in which critical realism meets these objections will give a clearer idea of how it conceives knowledge.

Critical realism recognizes, from the first, the different status of cognitive content and object. That came out in our analysis of perception. It follows that you cannot literally compare idea and object. Man's situation is such that, while he responds to things, he cannot apprehend them as naïve realism supposes. But, if there is a good reason to suppose that ideas convey something of the nature of the object, we can still have knowledge. We must have faith in this knowledge-conveying capacity of data of all sorts. So much for the first objection.

The critical realist then asks himself what characteristics of the physical world can be copied or reproduced by data and elicited by an intelligent synthesis and interrogation of data. Let it be noted that the characteristics of the physical world are not qualities in the Lockean sense. It is the physical thing which is the object of knowledge, and we are not assuming that it has qualities stuck on it which we have to copy.

The answer to this first question is *the order, or structure of the external world*. The correspondence of two orders in different material is quite thinkable and does not demand the kind of specific, end-on, qualitative, cause-and-effect likeness which Lockean realism presupposes. What, alone, is required is a correlation and order in the subjective field corresponding to the structure in the physical realm. And it is precisely this correspondence that the pattern of perception offers. In other words, the structure of nature can be worked out by the mind through a careful study of the pattern of appearance. And, furthermore, since the sensible appearance is a qualified, or differentiated, order, and every datum has meaning to the inquiring mind, much knowledge about the world can be achieved. It is these leads that science rightly follows. The conclusion is that data can be used by the mind to attain knowledge of the structure and properties of things, properties being the name for responses of things to one another and to specific conditions. All this is knowledge, but it is different from the sort of knowledge that naïve realism stresses. We have even got beyond the perennial controversy about primary and secondary qualities.

I have examined in detail the knowledge of the external world which science offers, and have found that it all falls into categories which are either categories of order or categories which fit into and develop order, such as spatial and temporal positions, quantity, structure, composition, interdependence, behavior. These categories permit an immense variety of detail; but nowhere in science do you to-day find an attempt to copy qualities which are like specific sense-data. Knowledge has the external world for its archetype or object, but we must shake ourselves loose from the notion that it copies sensuous qualities which specific, isolated ob-

jects possess in their own right. Much of our knowledge tells us how things behave, not how they are dressed, as it were. Knowledge enables us to grasp and understand the structure and interactive process of things. And the crude material upon which this knowledge is built is patterned sense-data. Developed ideas are built up by the mind and asserted to be revelatory of objects by which they have been consciously controlled. Is this Lockean realism? There has at least been an advance.

The fundamental postulate of critical realism is, then, that patterned and correlated sense-data can mediate just the kind of knowledge of the physical world we actually possess according to science. The claim is there and it does not sound absurd. The content of perception contains a *translation* of the gross structure of the external world, and theory pushes this translation farther. But never do we intuit the very stuff of the physical world. Knowledge has its inevitable limitations. It is the form of reality, so to speak, not reality itself which is grasped by the human mind. But I would not reify this *form* in an Aristotelian way. The implications of this view for naturalism are obvious. It undermines the crude type of materialism. I do not think that it is ordinarily realized that perception is a mixture of sense-data and knowledge and that the fusion of data and knowledge encourages the intuitional idea of knowledge and masks the proper view. I think that neo-realism deceived itself at this point and that pragmatism, though more wary as to the difference between sense-data and knowledge, assumed the impossibility of carrying through epistemological dualism and stressed instrumentalism too blindly.

Let me summarize the way in which critical realism meets the traditional objections to representative realism. First, the physical object is not inferred but is affirmed. In this the critical realist is objective from the beginning. Second, the critical realist admits that he cannot compare his knowledge of the thing with the thing; but he never pretends to do so. Instead, he believes on sufficient grounds that his knowledge grasps much of the nature of the external object and that this knowledge is founded upon the communication with the thing which his data offer. This position is more than semeiology. In knowledge we get a grip on reality.

In the third place, the outlook of critical realism is far more subtle than the crude notion of the likeness of object and idea as cause and effect respectively. It relegates the relation between data and object to the *causal condition* of knowledge and examines as distinct the claim of knowledge and its content.

Thus critical realism has outflanked Berkeley by developing a more exact conception of the nature of knowledge, while admitting all that is valid in his attack upon Locke. We gain knowledge of the physical thing, itself, and we discard the metaphysics of a substratum in which copyable qualities inhere. Epistemological dualism of this type meets all the traditional problems in a direct and unsophisticated way. I am not afraid to say that neo-realism will find in it all that it has been contending for in the way of a stress upon analysis and order and the knowledge-claim. The pragmatist, also, will find the recognition of his biological setting and his denial that sense-data are, as such, knowledge. But if my defense of epistemological dualism holds, he must retract his criticisms of epistemology. *Both neo-realism and pragmatism built their doctrines upon the assumption that it was impossible to carry through a valid type of epistemological dualism.* That was what they had in common. They have made their contributions but these can be accepted and related by critical realism.

One word in conclusion upon the mind-body problem. I wish only to show the approach which critical realism suggests. The organism is the object of scientific knowledge, and in this knowledge must be included physics, chemistry, biology and psychology. Is there a *second object* called mind? I do not see that there is. The mind-body problem consists, therefore, only in working out the proper meaning for mind and in showing that there is nothing in the knowledge gained by the physical sciences which logically excludes the realm of the subjective, or psychical, from the organism. I have carried this argument through in detail in several places and so will not repeat it here. My conclusion is that there is no logical connection between epistemological dualism and metaphysical dualism.

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